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PARIS, OLD AND NEW.

Perhaps no city of the modern world has such a universal fascination as that *ville lumière* whither good Americans go when they die, and a company by no means exclusive, Parthians, Medes, Persians, dwellers in Mesopotamia and in all parts of the earth resort while still in this mortal life. Since the Restoration, at least, Paris has never ceased to be to Europe what Venice once was, "the revel of the earth, the masque of Italy". Whatever it may be to the industrious artisans and frugal housewives, to us it is a bright plaisance, a place of joyous relaxation from narrowing cares, a chosen spot of which we may surely say that:

He who of those delights can judge and spare
To interpose them oft, is not unwise.

But, alas, some of us know very well that this is the Paris of our old recollections, not of our present experience, or at least we know that the Paris of to-day is something very different from the Paris of the Second Empire, different even from the Paris of the Third Republic's first decade. To the writer it has always seemed as though each exposition had marked a stage of deterioration, or perhaps, one would better say of vulgarization in the capital of enlightenment. The gayest Paris was that of the decade that followed Solferino, though doubtless the most joyous was the Paris of that *roi d'Yvetot*, Louis Philippe, the Paris of Murger's *Vie de Bohème*, when comfort and even modest luxury was still cheap and economy a fine art, when taste made the grisette's calico *comme il faut* and people really believed, what most Parisians now regard as a grotesque bit of *blague*, that content was "really better than wealth." After 1867, for all its brilliant array, there was a dull and growing uneasiness. More and more people began to see something like a hand that wrote on the wall: I have num-

bered thy days and finished them. Then came the national humiliation of Sedan and the disgrace of the Commune. These passed and the people were gay again, but there was something mephitic in the air of the Third Republic, where vice lost all its charm in revealing all its grossness, and where step by step the vulgar vices replaced both the graceful vices of the Empire and the vulgar virtues of the Orleans monarchy. Since 1877 the writer of this paper has visited Paris at intervals of three or four years, and has never failed to mark the downward course. It was therefore with peculiar interest that he undertook to say a few words of "Some Memories of Paris, by F. Adolphus,"¹ whose recollections extend over some half a century, a man who knows and loves his Paris, and whose wider knowledge grieves over the same degeneracy that we deplore.

As the title suggests, the plan of his book is to have no plan. He has had varied, interesting, even some exciting experiences, and he has noted them for us as they come to his mind, as he might do of an evening over a winter's fire. A good part of the charm of his book lies in its chattiness. He has talked to us so entertainingly about M. Worth that before we know it we have begun another chapter and are letting him talk to us about General Boulanger. From Boulanger we pass to the opera, and from the opera to the fireside. In general it is a book that will entertain almost all, while those who know their Paris very well are likely to find in it much serious profit. This sounds paradoxical but it is true. If you know by eye or books the Paris of forty years ago, the chances are that you will find your knowledge interestingly supplemented by Mr. Adolphus' first chapter. If you do not know that Paris, he will not give, he hardly tries to give, an accurate general impression. But he is most interesting, and in looking over a volume of Gavarni's sketches of the Parisians of that time the present reviewer found that he had gained light from these "Memories" on several interesting details. Our author has noted what has

¹ New York: H. Holt & Company. 1895.

perhaps escaped some, the radical difference between the population of a Paris street then and now ; and he might have added, with some restrictions, between the present Paris and the present Berlin or Vienna. There is no such intermingling of classes as there used to be when the stories of a house represented a fairly complete social stratification. When over the rich people on the first and second floors were clerks and tradespeople *en chambre* on the third and fourth floors, and workmen of all sorts on the fifth and sixth. Thorough mingling of ranks under the same roof was the "rule of life" in the Paris of Louis Philippe, as it is still in many parts of Berlin, and so the streets naturally presented a kaleidoscopic variety. Now this is all changed, and "the growing hate of the masses for the classes has been considerably stimulated by the separation." He notes, too, the changes in trade. Small shops have been crowded to the wall by the great *magazins*, with the social result so well indicated in Zola's *Au Bonheur des dames*, the street venders have ceased to amuse the crowd by their voluble harangues, and here, too, society under its sham democracy is less democratic at heart than under king or emperor.

This is the lesson also of Mr. Adolphus' third chapter, in which he tells of "Two Balls at the Hotel de Ville," one when Queen Victoria visited Paris in 1855, and another after the radical vultures of an elected *conseil municipal* had descended upon it. The former, for all its princes and potentates, for all its fine uniforms and stars of all the orders under heaven, was more democratic, more truly representative of the people than the swinish mob that gathers at the beckoning of the modern Thersites or Cleon. All classes that were interested were represented in them, royalty was neither stared at nor elbowed, they offered a fair and brilliant picture of an era of cosmopolitan peace and goodwill. No one who knows those festivities of the last generation but will be disposed to shake Mr. Adolphus by the hand when he says: "On looking back to other festivals at which I have assisted in many lands, I unhesitatingly put first those balls at the Hotel de Ville of Paris, and I con-

sider it a privilege to have seen them and to have the memory of them." To those who know them not, the reviewer can only say: Read Mr. Adolphus' chapter and you will know the reason why.

Nearly one half of Mr. Adolphus' book is taken up with the "terrible year," or to speak more accurately, with the nine months that separate Sedan from the collapse of the Commune. Like a sensible man, he does not attempt to tell us the history of those days, but only that corner of it which he saw and in much of which he played a modest but not unworthy part. To those who honestly believe, if there be such, in the glittering generality *Vox populi vox dei* one would commend a prayerful consideration of these chapters on the Last Day of the Empire, on the English Food Gifts after the Siege, on the Entry of the Germans, and on the Commune. Mr. Adolphus is not a great writer but he has seen the *bête humaine* uncaged and the impression was too vivid that it should need the art of Dante to convey to his readers a good measure of his horror and disgust at the unveiling of this seething Malebolge. As he leaves the yelling crowds of the Fourth of September, he notes how "the moral impression hung massively upon me. I turned away into back streets, where there were shadows in harmony with my thoughts. I crawled home, lay down and felt wretched. I knew, at last, what it is to see a nation sink." But he did not know into what vileness it had sunk. One may drown in pure water, one may perish at Thermopylæ, but Paris chose to suffocate in a sewer, to hawk and tear at its own prostrate body. Mr. Adolphus came in contact with the foul scum of the Commune during the distribution of the English food-supplies after the first siege, of which he thinks the sufferings and privations grossly exaggerated. He tells us that among the applicants for relief there were rather frequently represented "physiognomies so appallingly depraved, so befouled with degradations and defilements, so denaturalized by hideous appetites that . . . without actually staring at them no one could have supposed

it possible in man. They could not be described as animal, for no animal is capable of expressing such pollution or of exhibiting such vice ; they had a meaning which humanity alone dragged down to its deepest corruption can convey." And yet people thought the Versailles government extreme because they shot only eight thousand of these scoundrels after they had polluted, plundered, and burned the fairest city of the world. They have learned since, and perhaps they have regretted, that "they scotched the snake, not killed it."

Mr. Adolphus' memories of the second siege are curious and often exciting. Many of them he shared with Lawrence Oliphant. This is good reading for one who desires to acquire what the ascetic writers commend as contempt of the world. Is this passage from the testimony of an eye-witness in a European capital in 1871. or is it a diseased vision of a Swift brooding on Yahoo humanity? The Germans have just entered Paris. "A friend of mine saw a young woman, smartly dressed, but pale and seemingly half starved, trying to talk to some officers at the corner of the Rue de Presbourg in the Avenue Josephine. And then, when she turned away from them, he saw also, to his sickening disgust, a band of blackguards rush at her. Within half a minute all her clothes were torn from the unhappy creature and she was cruelly beaten ; and there she stood shrieking in the sunlight with nothing left untattered on her but her stays and boots, her bare flesh bleeding everywhere from cuts. And this is what those ruffians called 'patriotism'."

Since these were the men who made the Commune it is hardly necessary to dwell on the various exhibitions of odious imbecility that crowded on the attention of this observant foreigner from his house by the Parc Monceau. But it may be worth while to record this definition of the Commune which he cites from a friend to close his chapter : It was "a yell from the lower man ; an up-seething from the turbid sources ; a snatch at the impossible and undefined ; a failure where success would have meant a

nation's shame." One turns with relief from these gloomy pictures of abject degradation and merciless brutality to the author's futile interview with M. Worth, the man milliner, on the philosophy of clothes, of which indeed M. Worth seemed to understand very little, save that "women dress, of course, for two reasons: for the pleasure of making themselves smart, and for the still greater joy of snuffing out the others. . . . They deliver themselves to me in confidence and I decide for them; that makes them happy. If I tell them they are suited, they need no further evidence. . . . Most of them leave it all to me. . . . I don't want people to invent for themselves. If they did I should lose half my trade." This certainly has a naïve charm for *monsieur qui paie*. But the whole chapter is genial and worth reading, as is also the rather more cynical tale of the passing of poor, vain Boulanger and his "arrogant" black horse "composed principally of a brandishing tail, a new-moon neck, a looking-glass skin, and the actions of Demosthenes." The whole was a good sermon to the (misquoted) text from the Biglow Papers: "I du believe In humbug generally, because I find it is a thing, That has a solid vally."

Least satisfactory, perhaps, are the concluding chapters on the Opera and on Indoor Life. The former is too antiquarian, the latter too indefinite, and it suffers by comparison with the psychologic keenness of Hamerton's "French and English." But even these chapters have given the reviewer a pleasure which he trusts his readers may share as he joins with the author in the hope that the *parisiennes* may some day "recover fully those graces, those capacities, and that intelligence . . . which were so delightfully distinctive of their mothers."

J. A.